



(10) **Patent No.:** US 6,855,595 B2
(45) **Date of Patent:** Feb. 15, 2005

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FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)

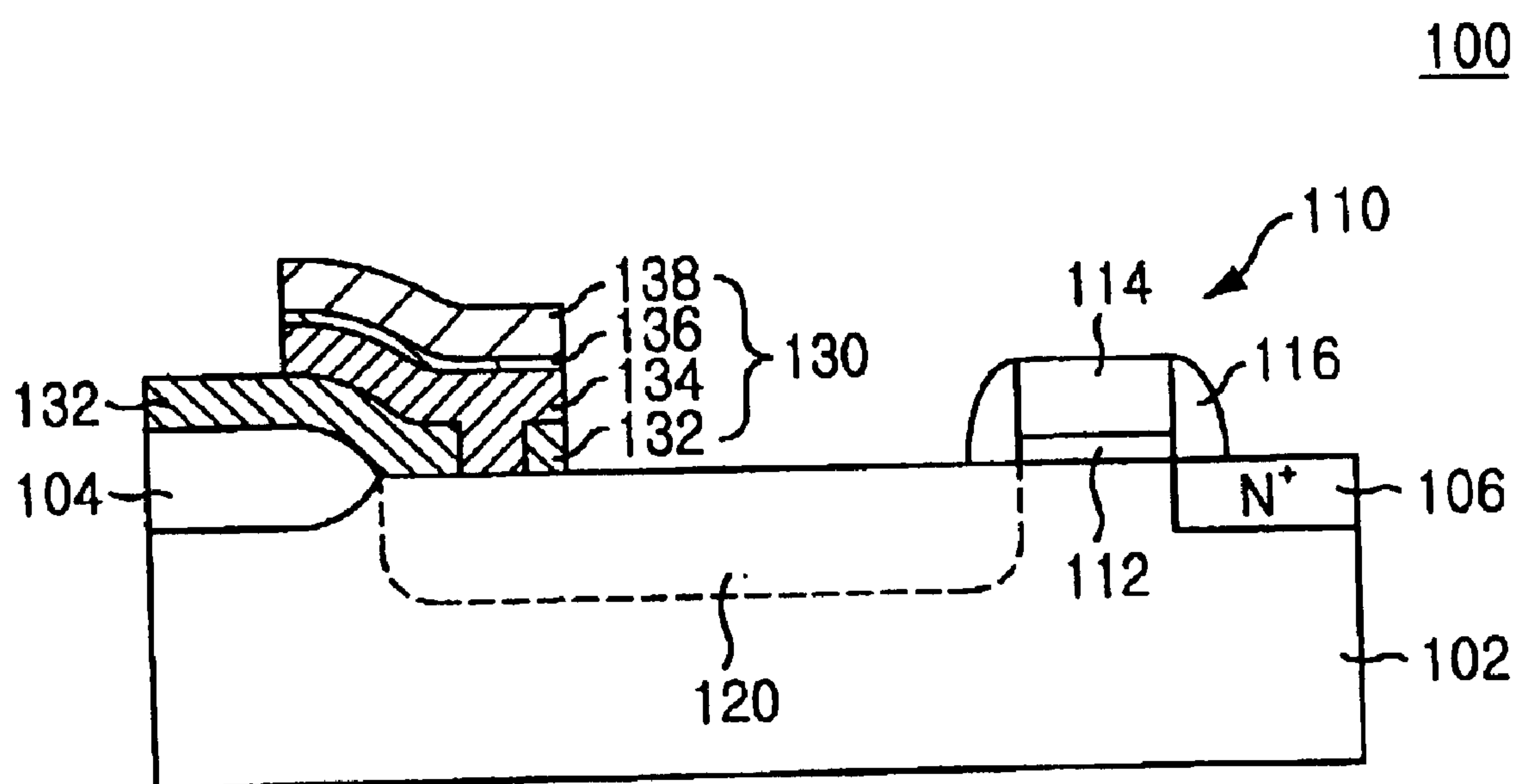


FIG. 2A
(PRIOR ART)

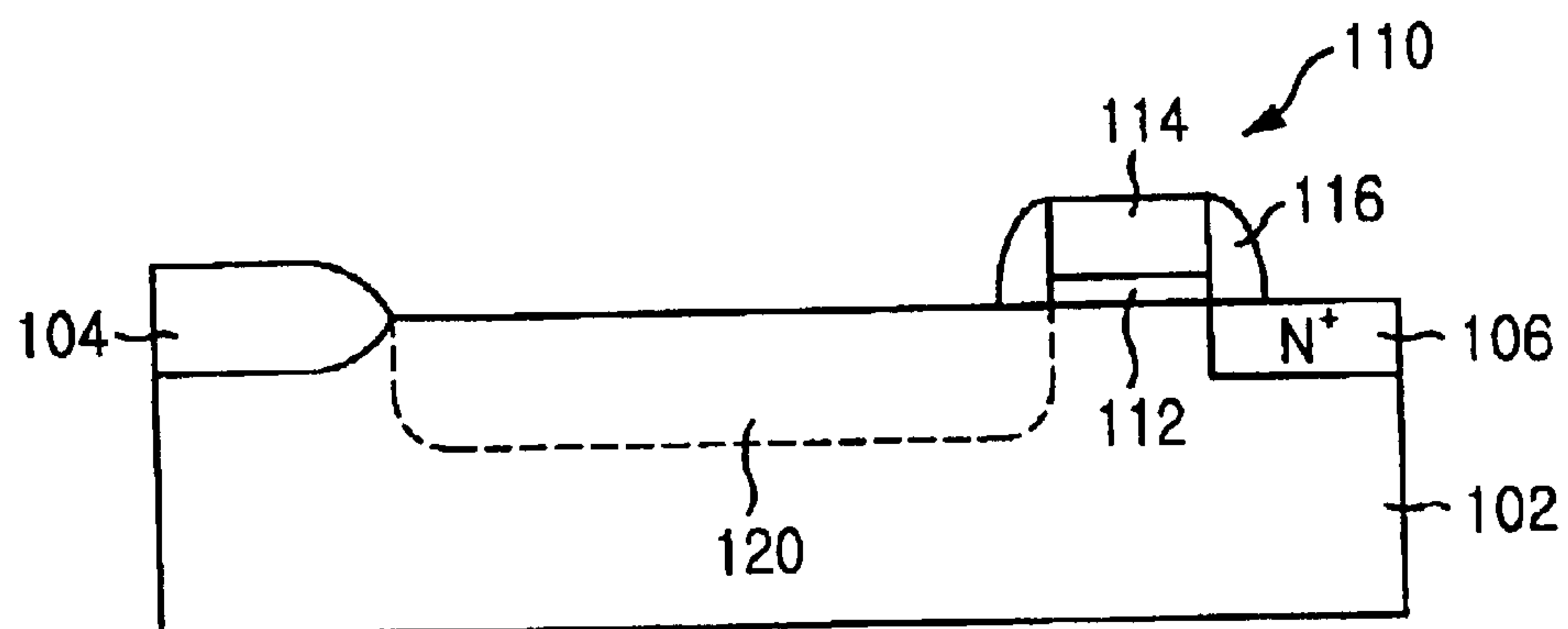


FIG. 2B
(PRIOR ART)

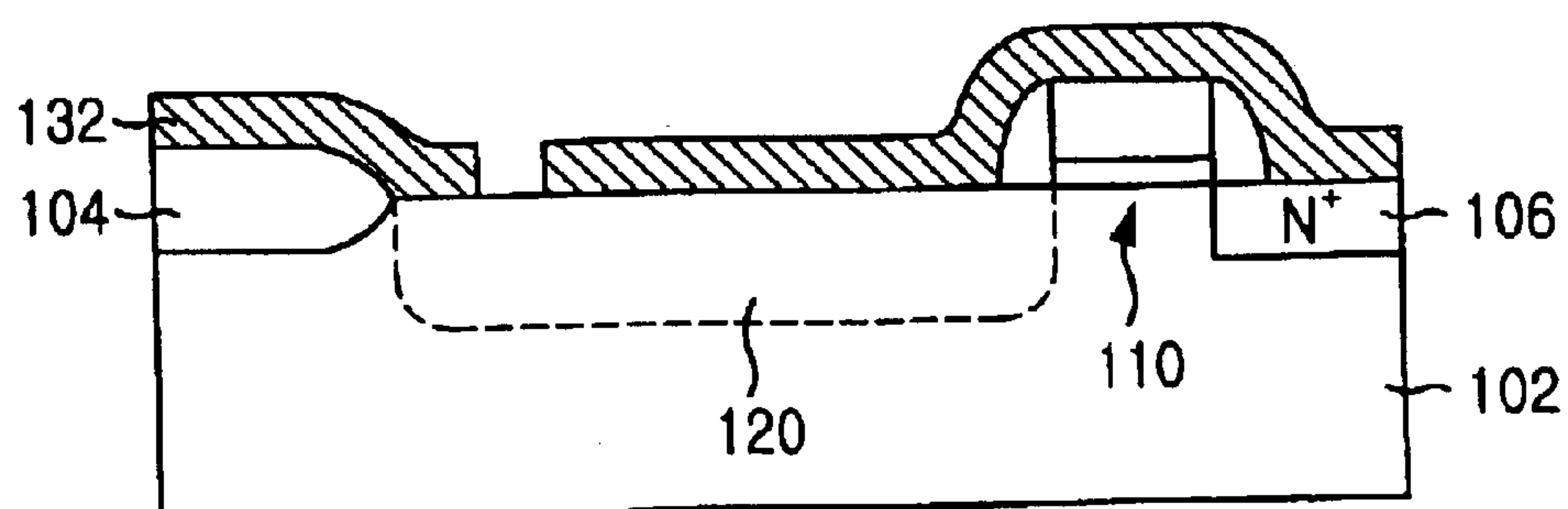


FIG. 2C
(PRIOR ART)

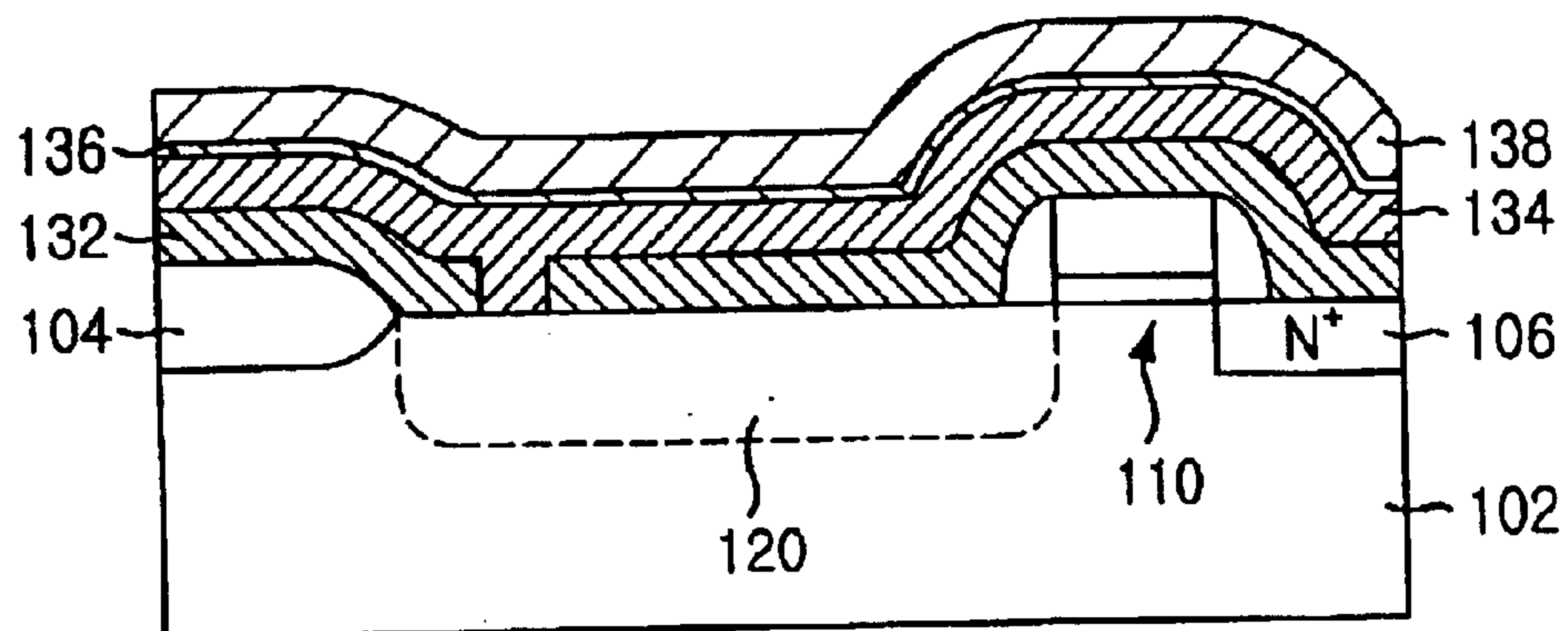


FIG. 2D
(PRIOR ART)

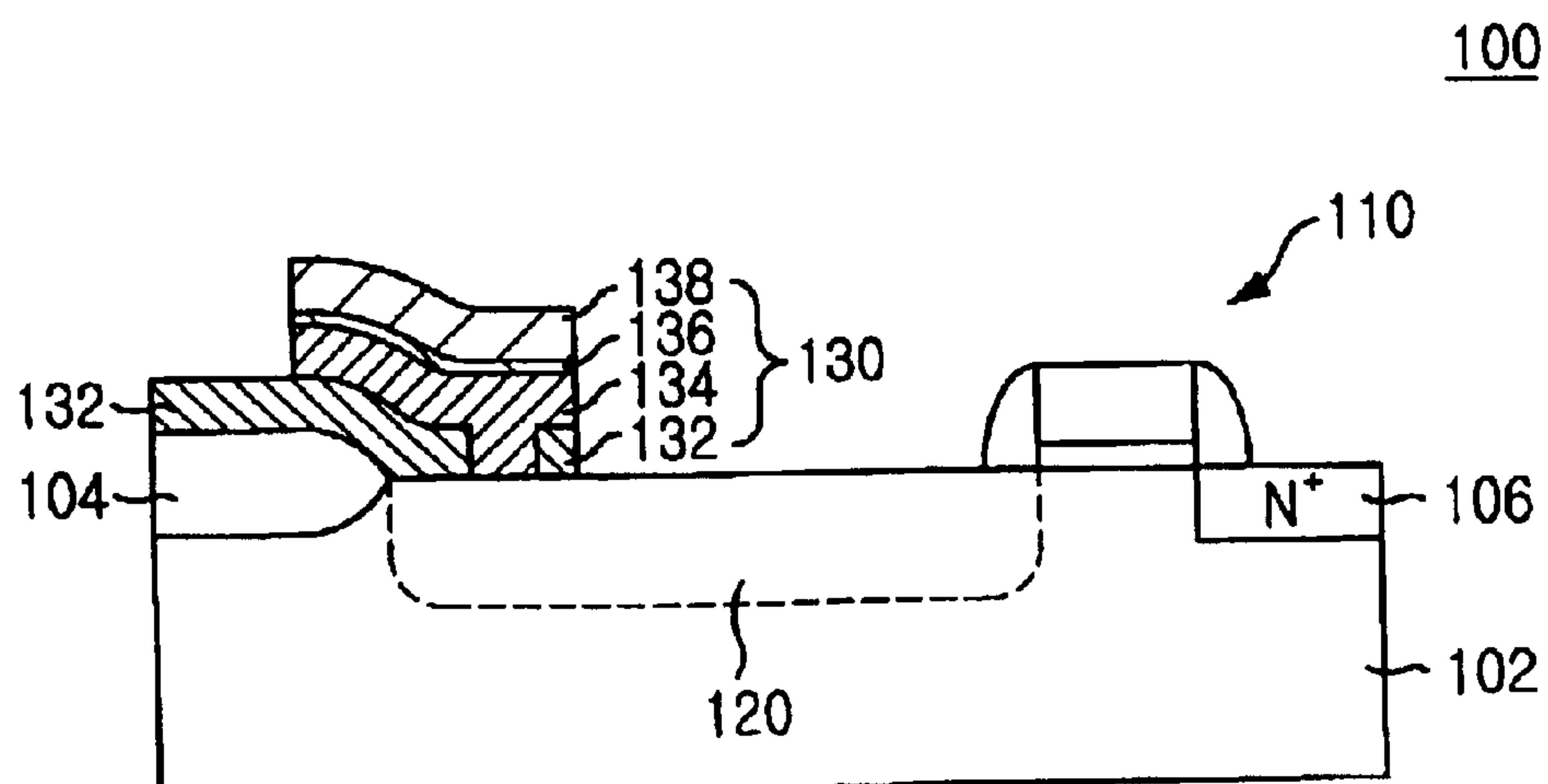


FIG. 3

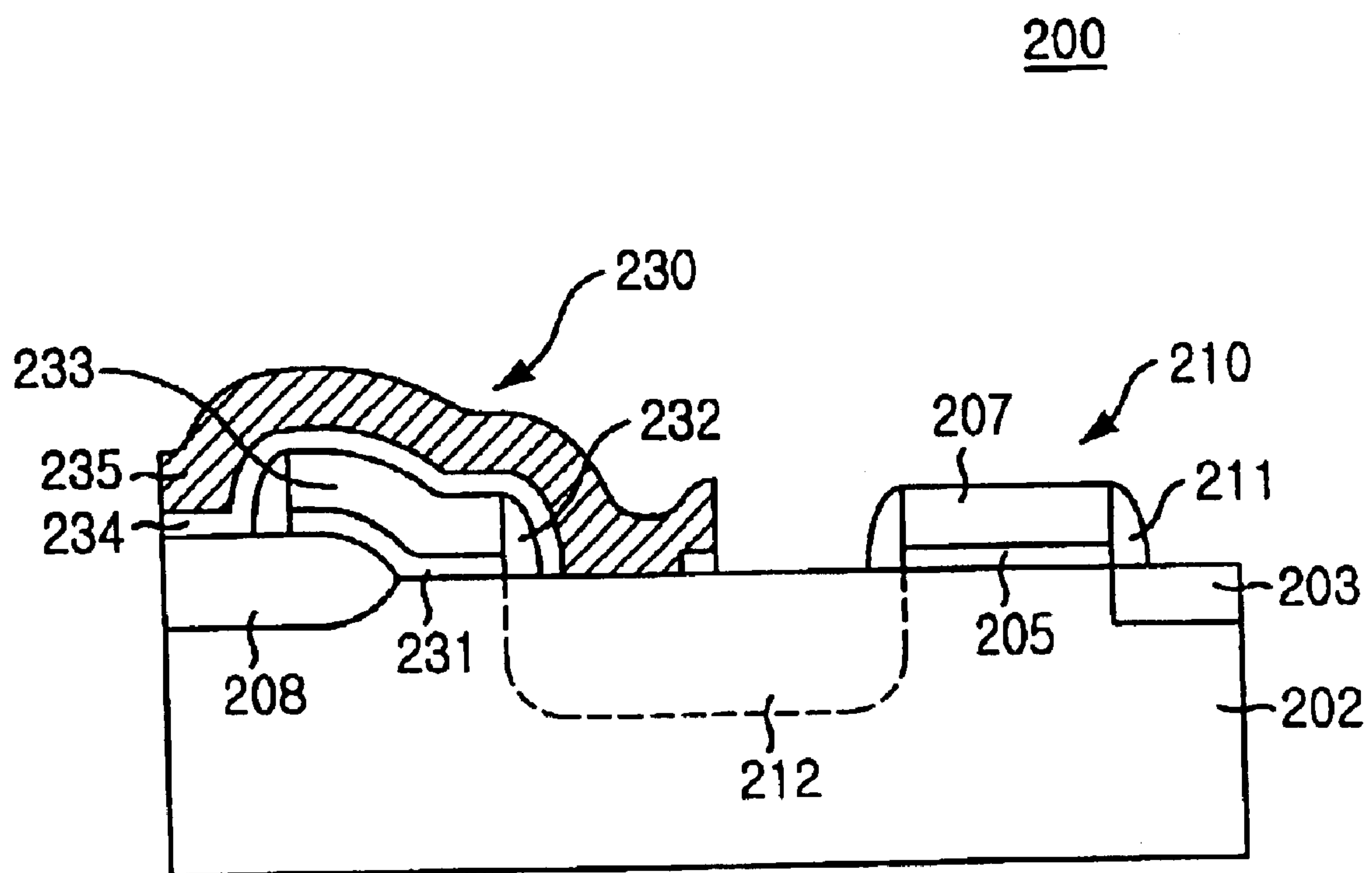


FIG. 4A

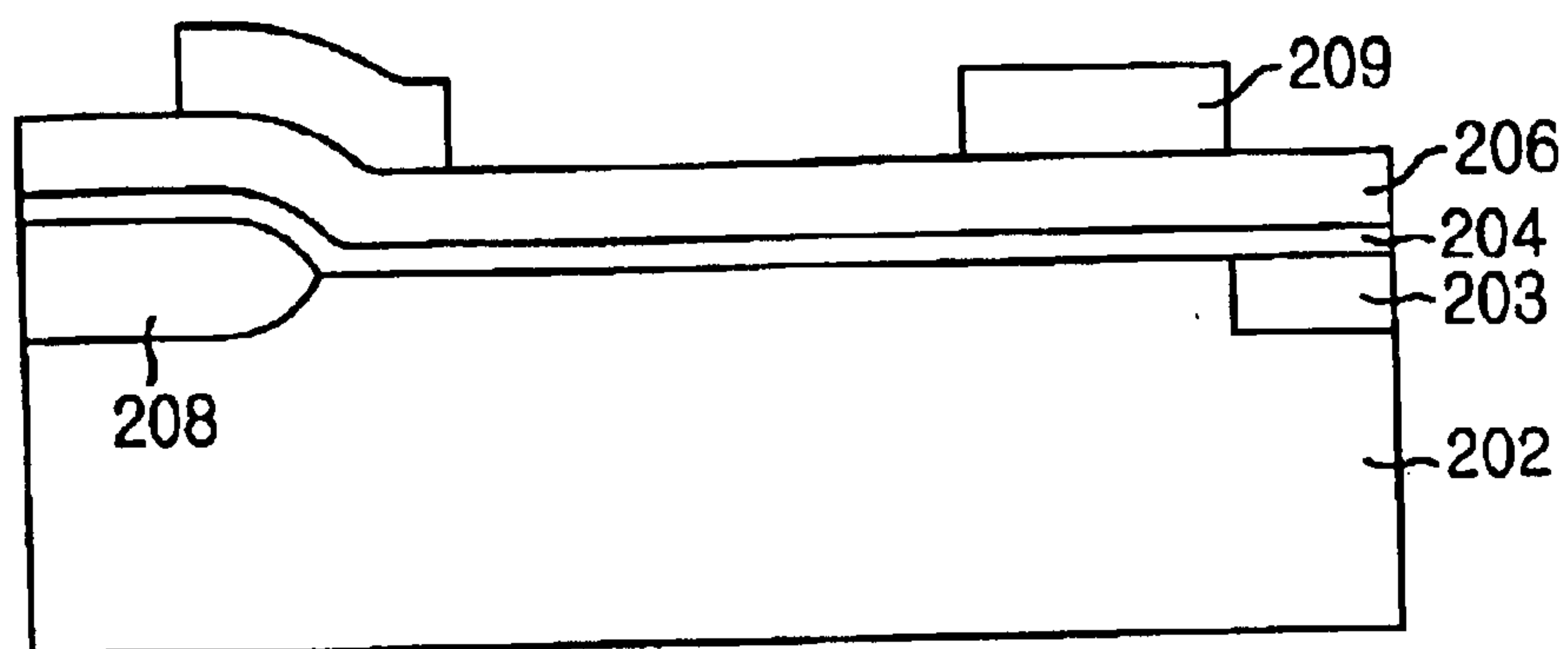


FIG. 4B

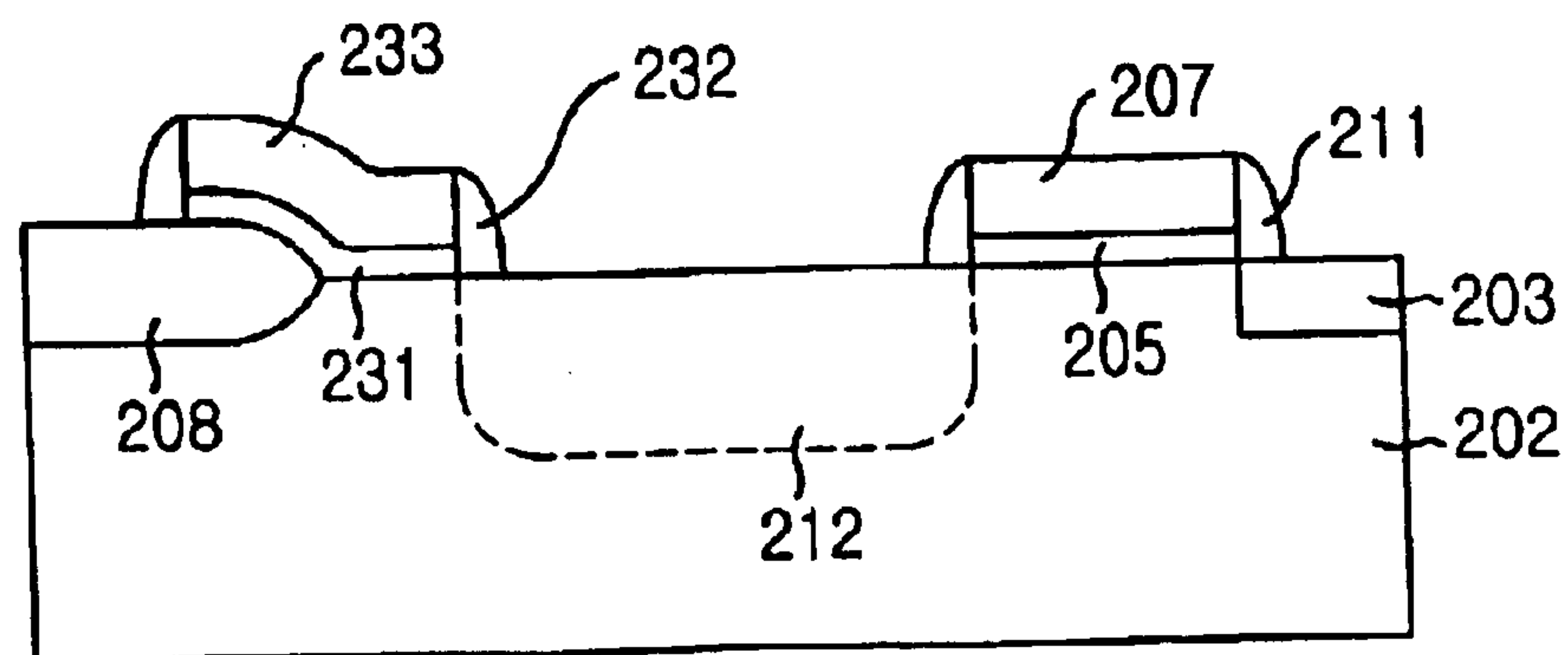


FIG. 4C

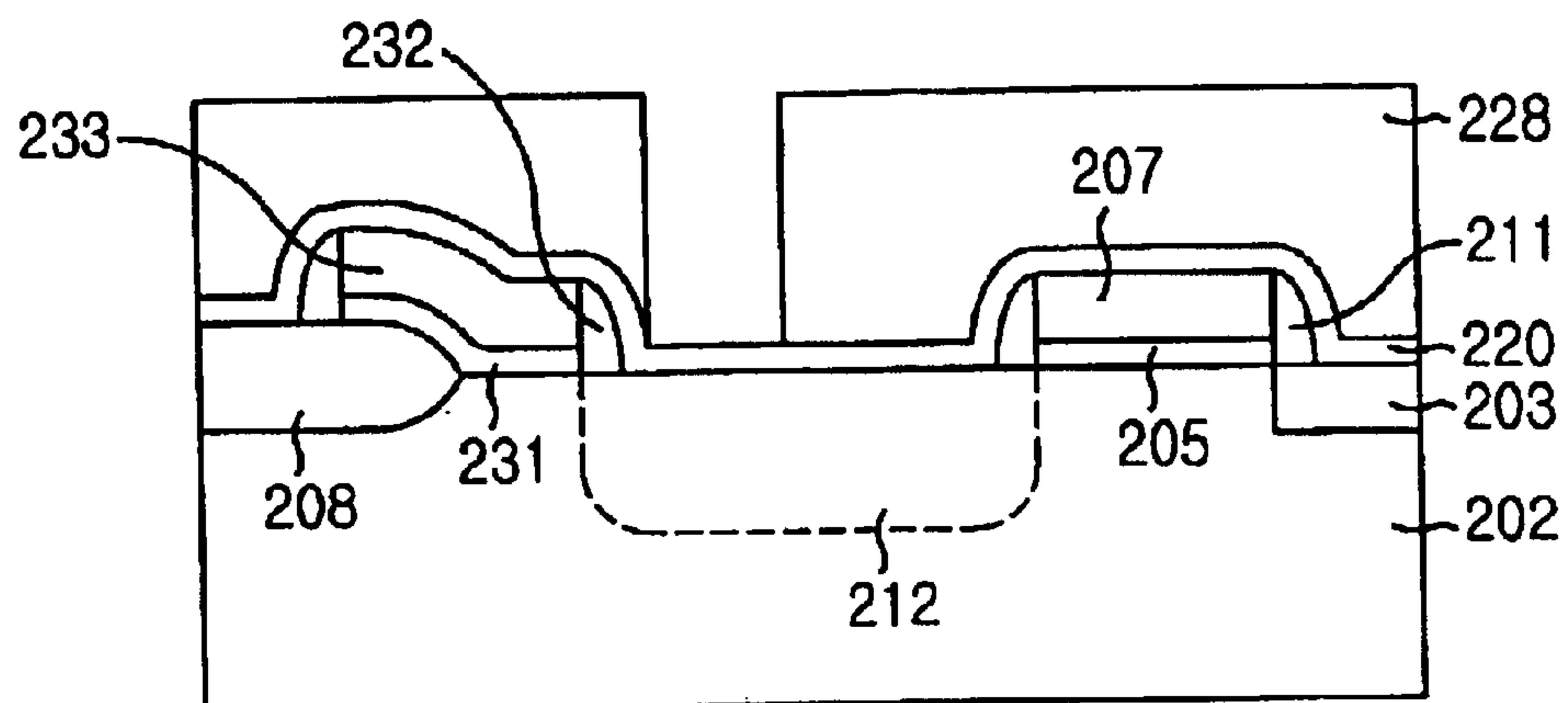


FIG. 4D

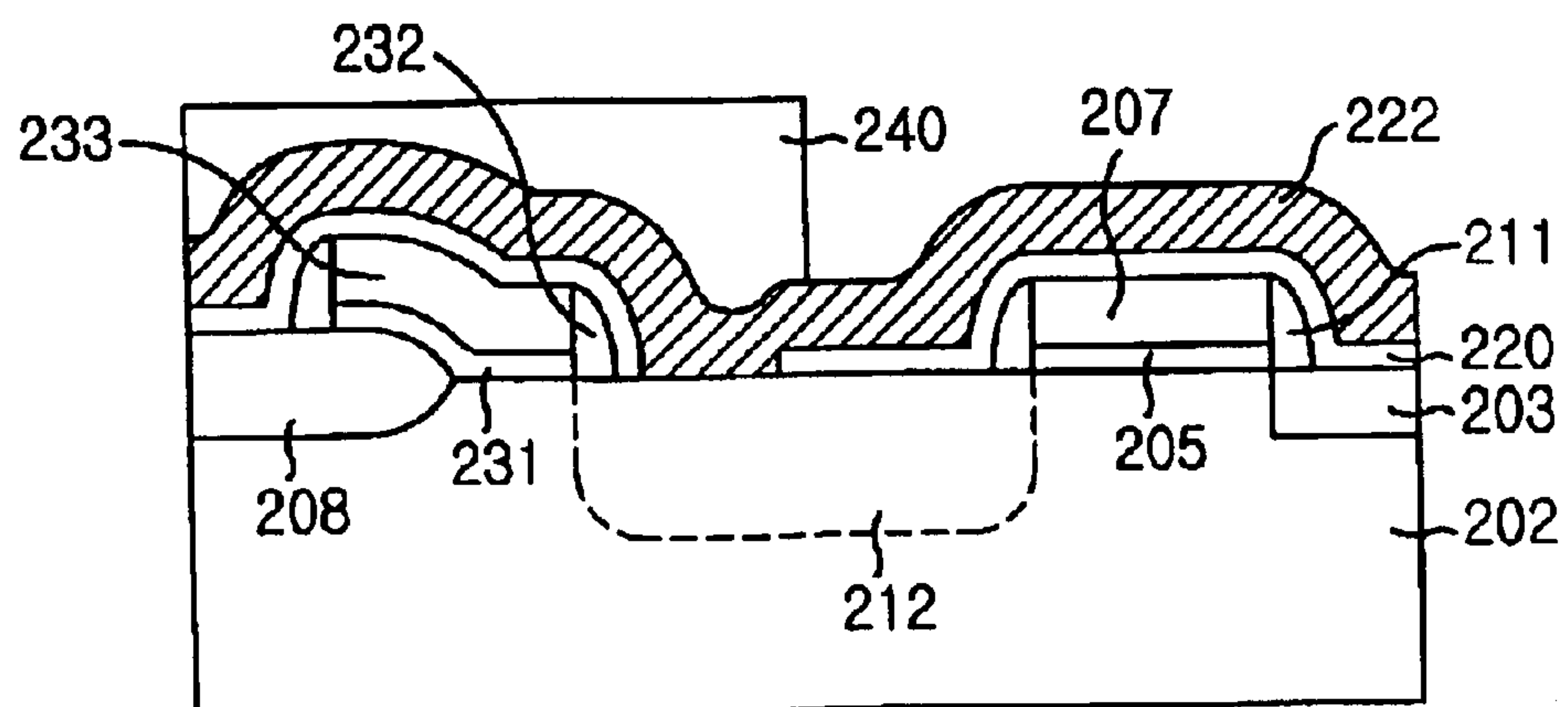


FIG. 4E

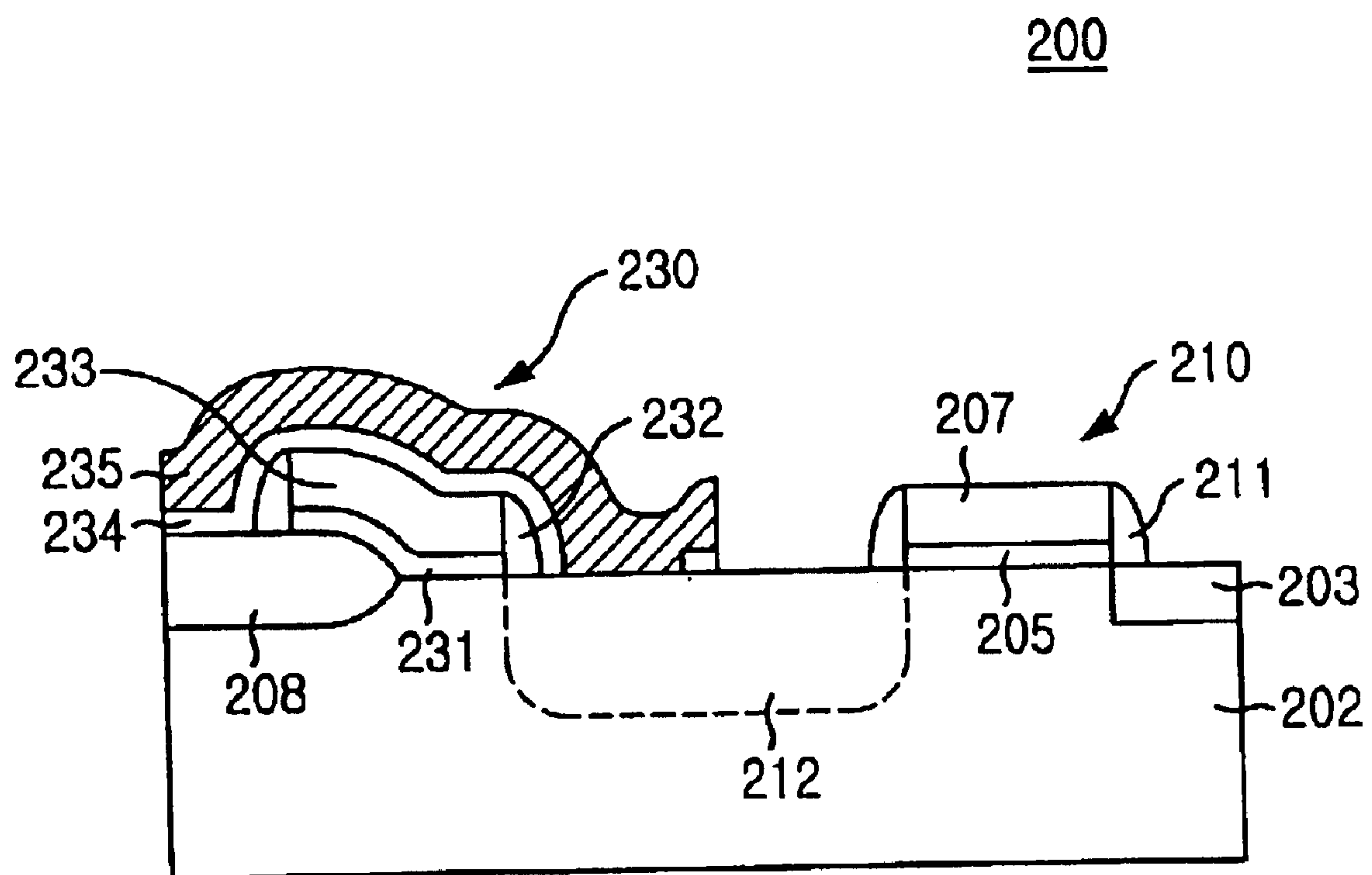


FIG. 5

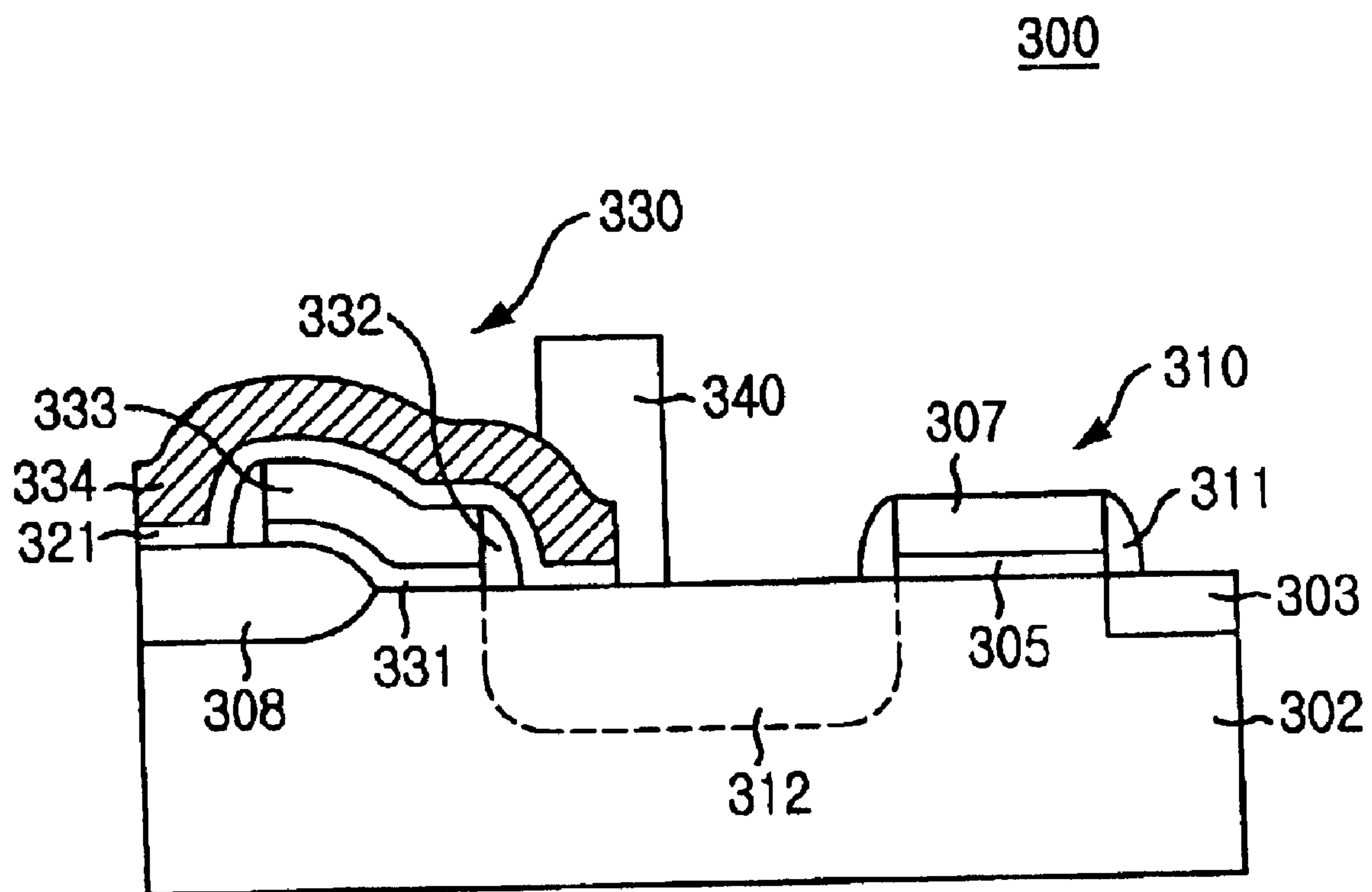


FIG. 6A

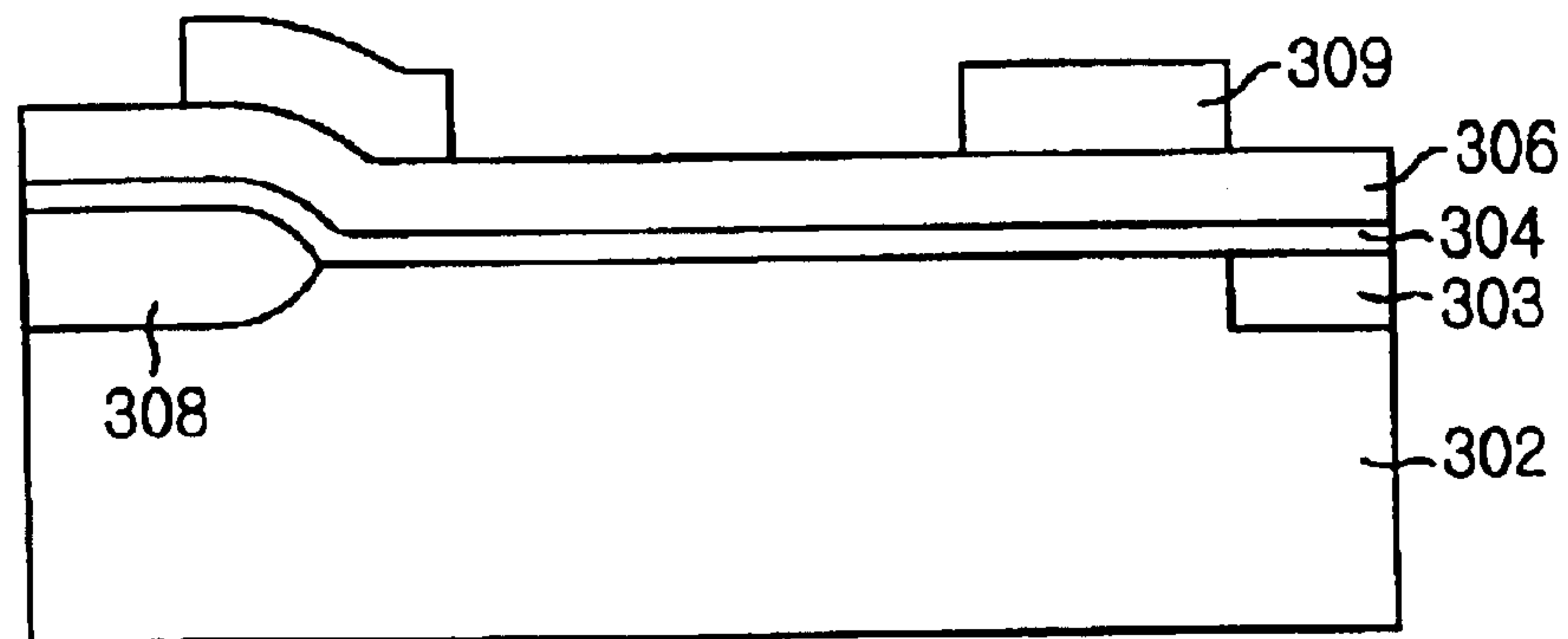


FIG. 6B

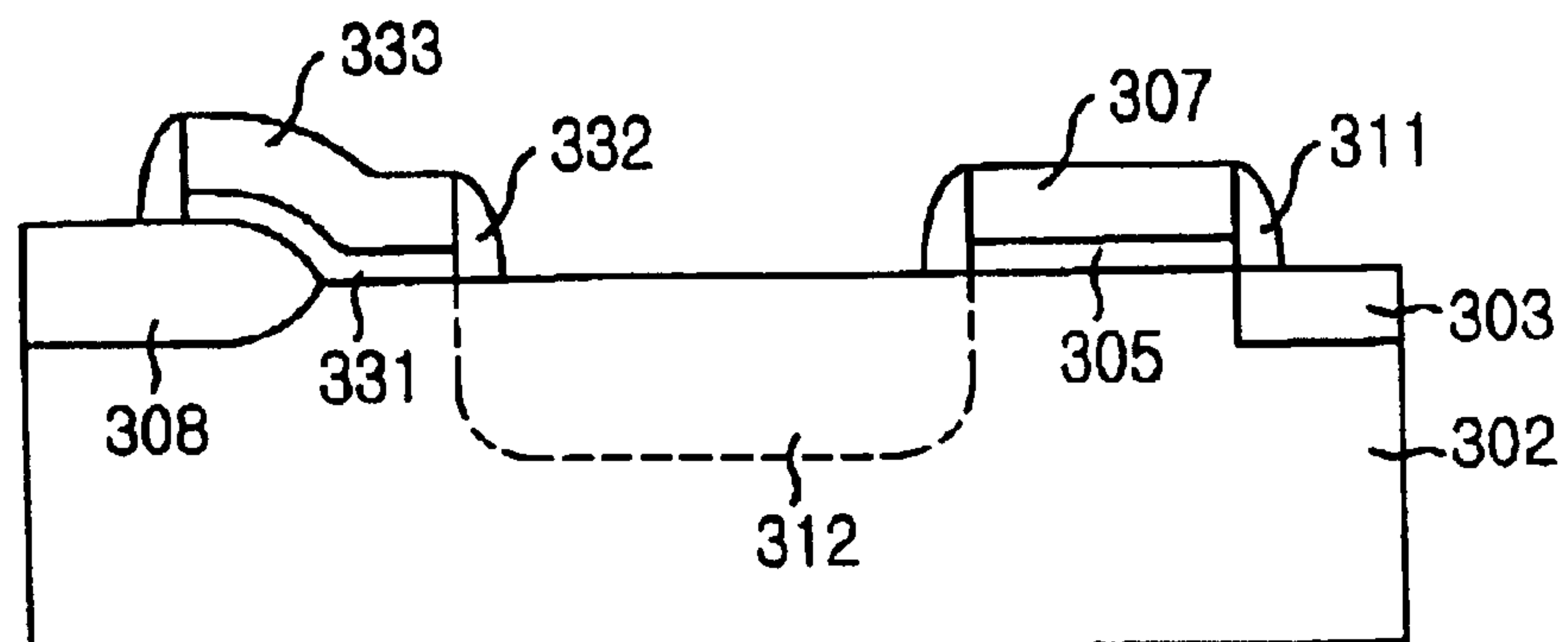


FIG. 6C

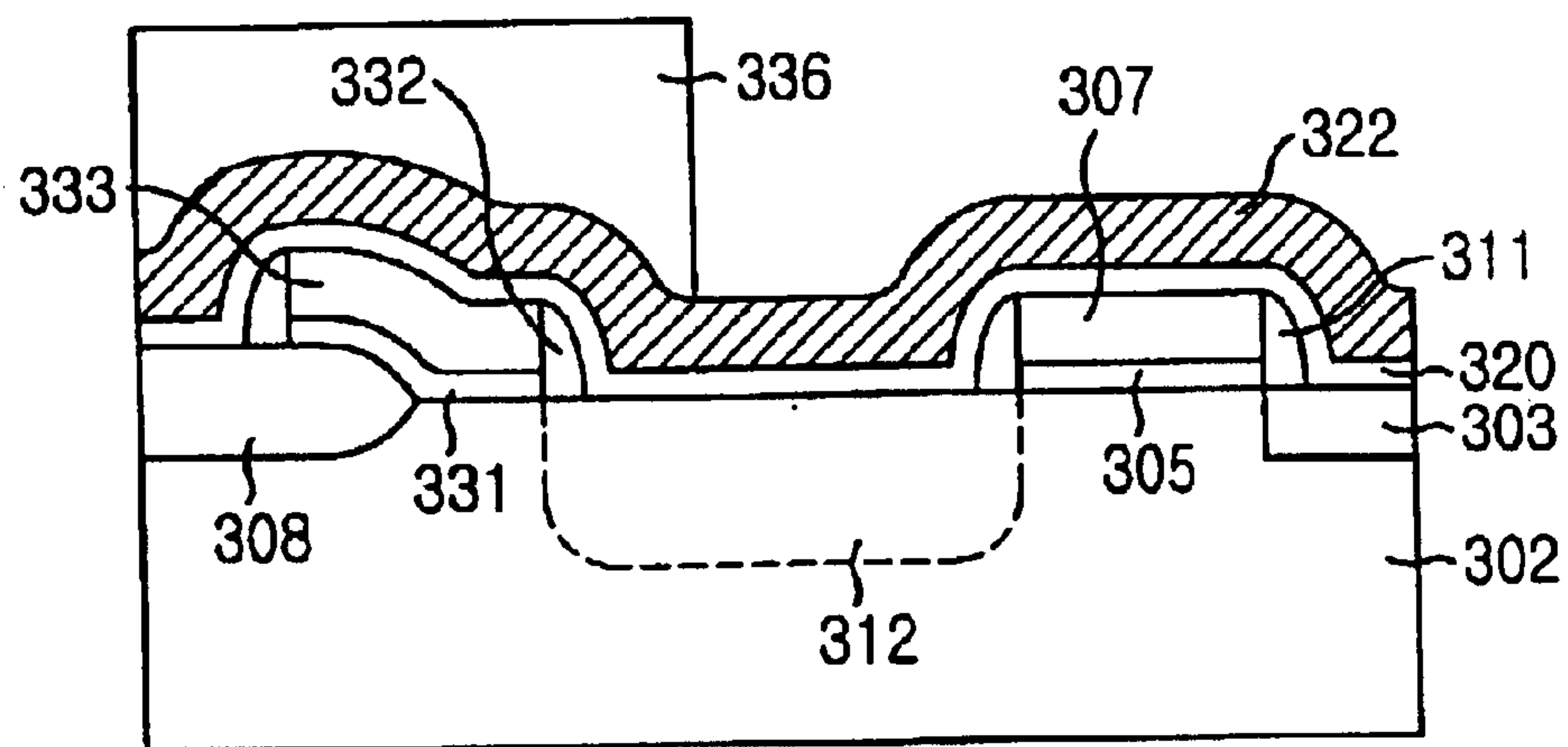


FIG. 6D

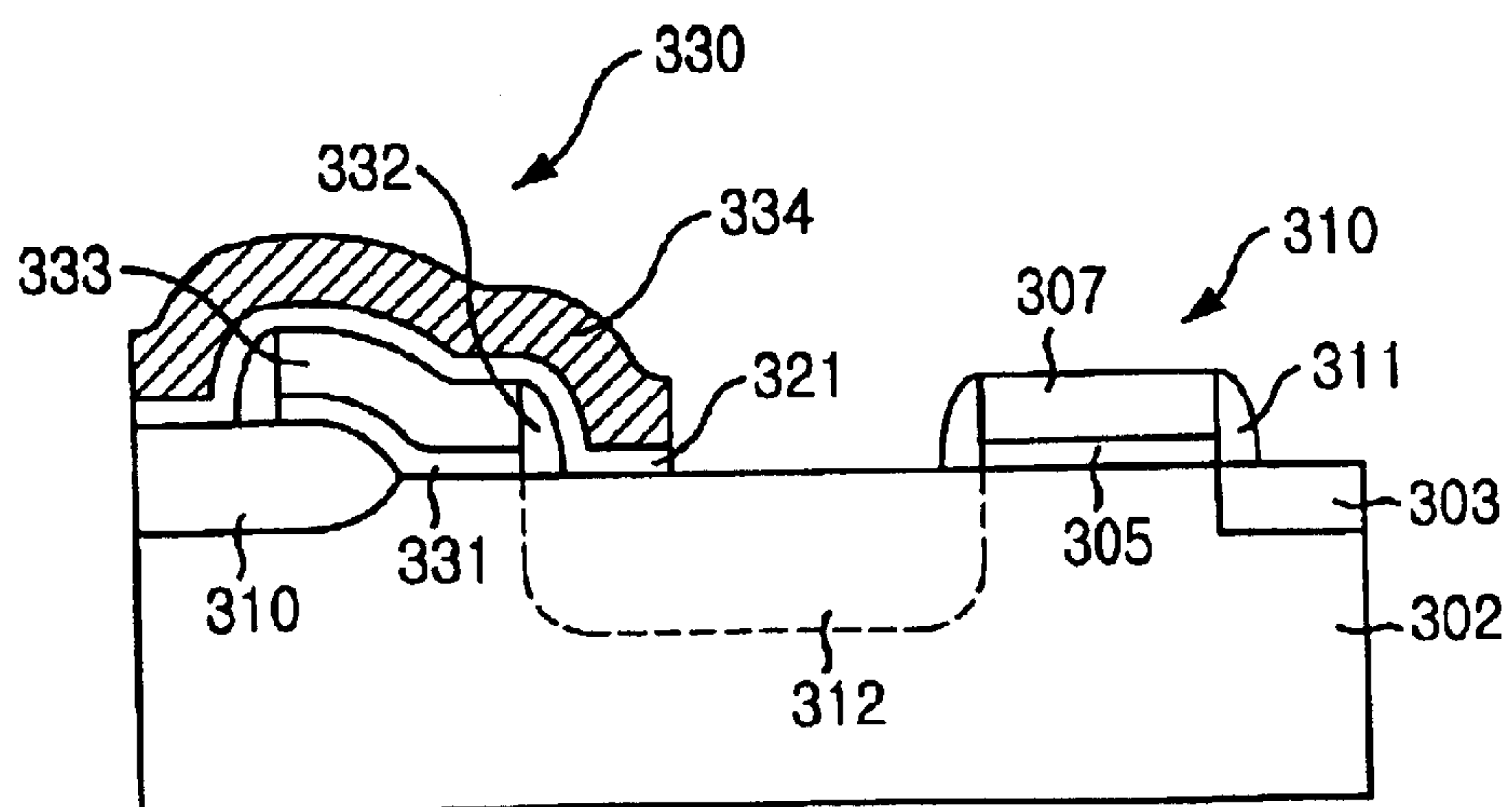
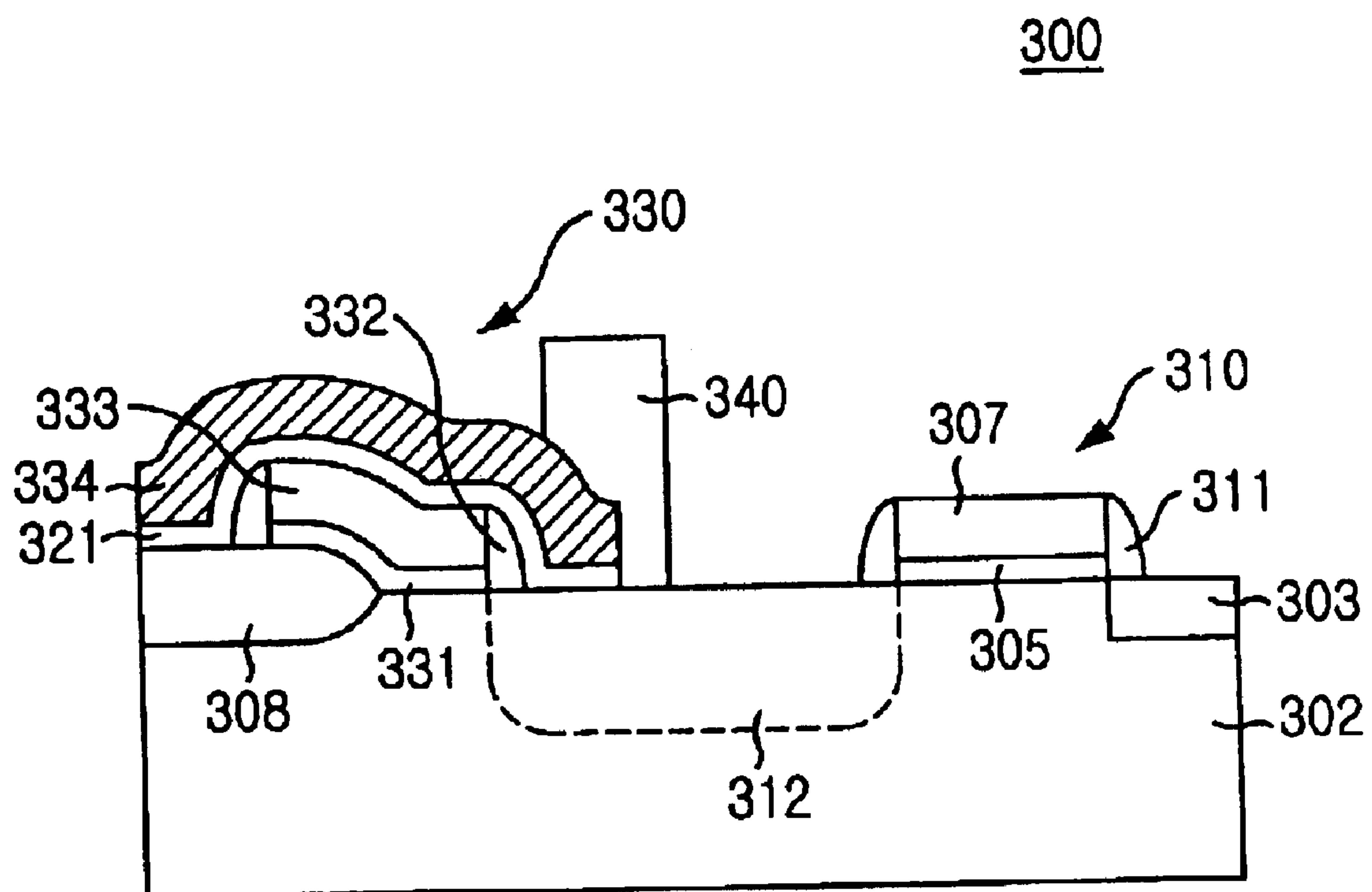


FIG. 6E



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METHOD FOR MANUFACTURING A CMOS IMAGE SENSOR HAVING A CAPACITOR'S TOP ELECTRODE IN CONTACT WITH A PHOTO-SENSING ELEMENT

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an image sensor; and, more particularly, to an image sensor incorporating therein a capacitor structure for improving an optical efficiency of the image sensor.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

As is well known, an image sensor is a semiconductor device for sensing a light reflected from an object to generate an image data. Especially, an image sensor fabricated by using a complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) technology is called a CMOS image sensor.

Generally, the CMOS image sensor includes a plurality of unit pixels. Each of the unit pixels also includes a light sensing element and a plurality of transistors. The light-sensing element such as a photodiode senses incident light reflected from an object and accumulates photoelectric charges that are generated due to the incident light. The transistors control a transfer of the photoelectric charges.

In FIG. 1, there is shown a prior art image sensor **100** including: a silicon substrate **102**, a photodiode **120** formed into the silicon substrate **102** for sensing a light beam incident thereto and generating photoelectric charges, a capacitor structure **130** formed on the silicon substrate **102** and the photodiode **120**, a diffusion region **106**, a transfer transistor **110** formed on the photodiode **120**, the diffusion region **106** and an isolation region **104**.

In the image sensor **100**, the transfer transistor **110** is provided with a gate dielectric **112**, a gate electrode **114** and a spacer **116**. The transfer transistor **110** is coupled to a sensing node for transferring the photoelectric charges to the sensing node in response to a transfer control signal. The capacitor structure **130** is provided with an insulating film **132**, a bottom electrode **134**, a capacitor dielectric **136** and a top electrode **138**. In case when the photodiode **120** does not have sufficient capacitance, a certain portion of the photoelectric charges cannot be stored in the photodiode **120**, which will, in turn, leak out into the silicon substrate **102**, thereby decreasing an overall optical efficiency thereof and making noises in the image sensor **100**. These problems can be eliminated by using the capacitor structure **130** which is capable of providing additional capacitances to the photodiode **120**.

In FIGS. 2A to 2D, there are illustrated manufacturing steps involved in manufacturing the conventional image sensor **100**.

The process for manufacturing the conventional image sensor **100** begins with the preparation of an active matrix having a silicon substrate **102**, a transfer transistor structure **110** formed thereon, an isolation region **104** and a photodiode **120** formed into the silicon substrate **102**, as shown in FIG. 2A. An insulating layer **132**, e.g., made of SiO_x, is formed over the entire surface by using a chemical vapor deposition (CVD) technique. The photodiode **120** is capable of converting a light beam incident thereto into photoelectric charges. The transfer transistor **110** includes a gate oxide **112**, a gate electrode **114** and a spacer **116**. The transfer transistor **110** is coupled to a sensing node **106** for transferring the photoelectric charges to the sensing node **106** in

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response to a transfer control signal. The sensing node **106** can be connected to a transistor such as a reset transistor or an amplification transistor not shown for the sake of simplicity.

Referring to FIG. 23, an insulating layer **132**, e.g., made of silicon oxide (SiO₂), is formed on top of the active matrix by using a method such as CVD. Thereafter, the insulating layer **132** is patterned into a first predetermined configuration to form a contact hole.

In a next step, a bottom electrode layer **134**, a capacitor dielectric layer **136** and a top electrode layer **138** are formed on the insulating layer **132**, successively, as shown in FIG. 2C.

Finally, the top electrode layer **138**, the capacitor dielectric layer **136** and the bottom electrode layer **134** are patterned into a second predetermined configuration, thereby obtaining a capacitor structure **130**.

One of the major shortcomings of the above-described image sensor **100** is that it has complex manufacturing steps to form the capacitor structure **130** on the photodiode **120**.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide an image sensor incorporating therein a capacitor structure for improving an optical efficiency thereof.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a method for manufacturing an image sensor incorporating therein a capacitor for improving an optical efficiency hereof.

In accordance with an aspect of the present invention, there is provided an image sensor provided with a plurality of unit pixels, each unit pixel comprising: a photoelectric element for sensing a light beam incident thereto and generating photoelectric charges; a transistor including a gate dielectric formed adjacent to the photoelectric element and a gate electrode formed on top of the gate dielectric; and a capacitor structure including an insulating film formed on a portion of the photoelectric element and a bottom electrode, wherein the insulating film and the gate dielectric are made of a same material and the bottom electrode and the gate electrode are made of a same material.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for manufacturing an image sensor, the method comprising the steps of: a) preparing a silicon substrate; b) forming a first dielectric layer and a first conductive layer, successively; c) patterning the first dielectric layer and the first conductive layer to obtain an insulating film and a bottom electrode of a capacitor structure and a gate dielectric and a gate electrode of a transistor, simultaneously; d) implanting a first type of dopants into a portion of the silicon substrate which is not covered with the insulating film and the gate dielectric and placed therebetween, thereby forming a photoelectric element; e) forming a second dielectric layer; f) removing a portion of the second dielectric layer which is located on top of the photoelectric element, thereby forming a contact hole; g) forming a second conductive layer on top of the second dielectric layer and the contact hole; and h) removing portions of the second conductive layer and the second dielectric layer which are placed on top of the gate electrode and the remaining portion of the photoelectric element.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects and aspects of the invention will become apparent from the following description of the embodiments with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

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FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view showing a prior art CMOS image sensor;

FIGS. 2A to 2D provide cross-sectional views presenting a prior art method for manufacture of the CMOS image sensor shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 illustrates a cross-sectional view representing a CMOS image sensor in accordance with a first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 4A to 4E are schematic cross-sectional views illustrating a method for the manufacture of a CMOS image sensor shown in FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view setting forth a CMOS imager sensor in accordance with a second preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

FIGS. 6A to 6E show schematic cross-sectional views depicting a method for the manufacture of a CMOS image sensor in accordance with a second preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

There are provided in FIGS. 3, 4A to 4E, 5, and 6A to 6E a cross-sectional views of CMOS image sensors **200** and **300**, and cross-sectional views setting forth methods for the manufacture thereof in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

In FIG. 3, there is provided a cross sectional view of the inventive image sensor **200** comprising a silicon substrate **202**, a photo-sensing element **212**, an isolation region **208**, a transfer transistor **210** and a capacitor structure **230**. The photo-sensing element **212** includes an N-type conducting region that is formed in the silicon substrate **202**. The conducting region forms a P-N junction with the P-type material of the silicon substrate **202** to collect photoelectric charges. Therefore, the photo-sensing element **212** is capable of converting a light beam impinging thereon into photoelectric charges. The transfer transistor **210** includes a gate oxide **205**, a gate electrode **207** and a spacer **211**. The transfer transistor **210** is coupled to a sensing node **203**. The sensing node **203** is implanted with N+ dopants for transferring the photoelectric charges to the sensing node **203** in response to a transfer control signal. Although the other devices, e.g., a reset transistor or an amplification transistor, are not shown for the sake of the simplicity, the sensing node can be connected to the other devices.

The capacitor structure **230** includes an insulating film **231**, a bottom electrode **233**, a spacer **232**, a capacitor dielectric **234** and a top electrode **235**. In the preferred embodiment, the insulating film **231** is made of a material, e.g., SiO_x or the like, used for the gate oxide **205**. The bottom electrode **233** is also made of a material, e.g., doped polysilicon or the like, used for the gate electrode **207**. It is possible that the gate oxide **205** and the insulating film **231** can be made of a high K dielectric material such as Ta₂O₅.

In FIGS. 4A to 4E, there are illustrated manufacturing steps involved in manufacturing the image sensor **200** in accordance with a first preferred embodiment of the present invention.

The process for manufacturing the image sensor **200** begins with the preparation of a silicon substrate **202** provided with an isolation region **208** and a sensing node **203** formed therein. Thereafter, a first dielectric layer **204**, e.g., made of SiO₂, is formed on the silicon substrate **202** by using a method such as a chemical vapor deposition (CVD). A first conductive layer **206**, e.g., made of doped polysilicon,

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formed on top of the first dielectric layer **204** by using a method such as CVD. In order to define a conducting region, a transfer transistor and a capacitor structure, a first photoresist layer is formed on top of the first conductive layer **206** and patterned into a predetermined configuration, thereby obtaining a patterned photoresist layer **209**, as shown in FIG. 4A. It is preferable that the silicon substrate **202** is prepared with forming a P-type epitaxial layer on a P-type substrate, wherein an impurity concentration of the D-type epitaxial layer is lower than that of the P-type substrate.

In an ensuing step, portions of the first conductive layer **206** and the first dielectric layer **204**, which are not covered with the patterned photoresist layer **209**, are removed by using an etching process, thereby obtaining an insulating film **231**, a bottom electrode **233**, a gate dielectric **205** and a gate electrode **207**, as shown in FIG. 4B. Optionally, a spacer **211** can be formed on sides of the gate dielectric **205** and the gate electrode **207**. A spacer **232** also can be formed on sides of the insulating film **231** and the bottom electrode **233**. Thereafter, first N⁺ dopants are implanted into a sensing node **203** and second N⁺ dopants are implanted into the conducting region **212**, wherein the impurity of the second N⁺ dopants is deeper than that of the first N⁺ dopants.

In a next step, a second dielectric layer **220** is formed on top of the bottom electrode **233** and the gate electrode **207**. A second photoresist layer is formed on top of the second dielectric layer **220** by using a method such as a spin coating and patterned into a preset configuration **228** to define a contact hole, as shown in FIG. 4C. Thereafter, the second dielectric layer **220** is etched by using a chemical, thereby exposing a portion of the conducting region **212**.

In a following step, a second conductive layer **222**, e.g., made of doped polysilicon, is formed in the contact hole and formed on top of the second dielectric layer **220**. And then, a third photoresist layer is formed on top of the second conductive layer **222** and patterned into a certain configuration **240** to define a capacitor structure, as shown in FIG. 4D.

Thereafter, portions of the second conductive layer **222** and the second dielectric layer **220** are removed by using a method such as a chemical etching, thereby obtaining the capacitor structure **230**, as shown in FIG. 4E.

In comparison with the prior art, the present invention can reduce the steps of the manufacturing the image sensor **2000**. This is achieved by forming elements, e.g., the insulating film **231**, of the capacitor structure **230** and elements, e.g., the gate dielectric **205**, of the transfer transistor **210** in the same process.

Alternatively, in FIG. 5, there is provided a cross sectional view of an image sensor **300** in accordance with a second preferred embodiment of the present invention. The image sensor **300** comprises a silicon substrate **302**, a photo-sensing element **312**, an isolation region **308**, a transfer transistor **310** and a capacitor structure **330**.

The inventive image sensor **300** is similar to the image sensor **200** shown in FIG. 3 except that the top electrode **334** does not directly contact to the photo-sensing element **312**. In the second preferred embodiment, the top electrode **334** can be electrically connected to the photo-sensing element **312** through a conducting member **340**.

In FIGS. 6A to 6E, there are illustrated manufacturing steps involved in manufacturing the image sensor **300** in accordance with the second preferred embodiment of the present invention.

The process for manufacturing the image sensor **300** begins with the preparation of a silicon substrate **302** pro-

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vided with an isolation region **308** and a sensing node **303** formed therein. Thereafter, a first dielectric layer **304**, e.g., made of SiO_2 , is formed on the silicon substrate **302** by using a method such as a chemical vapor deposition (CVD). A first conductive layer **306**, e.g., made of doped polysilicon, 5 formed on top of the first dielectric layer **304** by using a method such as CVD. In order to define a conducting region, a transfer transistor and a capacitor structure, a first photoresist layer is formed on top of the first conductive layer **306** and patterned into a predetermined configuration, thereby 10 obtaining a patterned photoresist layer **309**, as shown in FIG. 6A. It is preferable that the silicon substrate **302** is prepared with forming a P-type epitaxial layer on a P-type substrate, wherein an impurity concentration of the P-type epitaxial layer is lower than that of the P-type substrate. 15

In an ensuing step, portions of the first conductive layer **306** and the first dielectric layer **304**, which are not covered with the patterned photoresist layer **309**, are removed by using an etching process, thereby obtaining an insulating film **331**, a bottom electrode **333**, a gate dielectric **305** and 20 a gate electrode **307**, as shown in FIG. 6B. Optionally, a spacer **311** can be formed on sides of the gate dielectric **305** and the gate electrode **307**. A spacer **332** also can be formed on sides of the insulating film **331** and the bottom electrode **333**. Thereafter, first N^+ dopants are implanted into a sending node **303** and second N^+ dopants are implanted into the conducting region **312**, wherein the impurity of the second 25 N^+ dopants is deeper than that of the first N^+ dopants.

In a next step, a second dielectric layer **320** is formed on top of the bottom electrode **333** and the gate electrode **307**. 30 A second conductive layer **322**, e.g., made of doped polysilicon, is formed on the second dielectric layer **320**, successively. And then, a second photoresist layer is formed on top of the second conductive layer **322** and patterned into a certain configuration **336** to define a capacitor structure, as shown in FIG. 6C. 35

Thereafter, portions of the second conductive layer **322** and the second dielectric layer **320**, which are not covered with the certain configuration **336** of the second photoresist layer, are removed by using a method such as a chemical 40 etching, thereby obtaining the capacitor structure **330**, as shown in FIG. 6D.

Finally, a conductive member **340** is formed on top of the photo-sensing element **312** with extending over the top electrode **334** of the capacitor structure **330** in such a way 45 that the photo-sensing element **312** is electrically connected to the top electrode **334**.

While the present invention has been described with respect to the particular embodiments, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications 50 may be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for manufacturing an image sensor, the method comprising: 55

- a) forming a photo-sensing element in a semiconductor substrate;
- b) forming a first dielectric layer on top of the semiconductor substrate;
- c) forming a first conductive layer on top of the first dielectric layer;
- d) patterning, substantially simultaneously, the first dielectric layer and the first conductive layer to form an insulating film and a bottom electrode of a capacitor 60 structure and a gate dielectric and a gate electrode of a transfer transistor;

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e) forming successively a second dielectric layer and a second conductive layer over the semiconductor substrate; and

f) removing portions of the second conductive layer and the second dielectric layer that overlie the photoelectric element and overlie the gate dielectric to form a capacitor dielectric and a top electrode of the capacitor structure; wherein a portion of the top electrode is in contact with the photo-sensing element.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step c) includes:

c1) patterning the first dielectric layer into a predetermined configuration to form the insulating film and the gate dielectric, substantially simultaneously; and

c2) patterning the first conductive layer into the predetermined configuration to form the bottom electrode and the gate electrode, substantially simultaneously.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

g) implanting dopants of a first type into an exposed portion of the semiconductor substrate that is between the insulating film and the gate dielectric to form the photo-sensing element.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising implanting dopants of a second type into a portion of the semiconductor substrate adjacent the gate electrode.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the gate dielectric is semiconductor oxide (SiO_x).

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the gate dielectric is tantalum oxide (Ta_2O_5).

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the insulating film and the gate dielectric are formed of the same type of material.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the gate electrode and the bottom electrode are formed of the same type of material.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the material is doped polysilicon.

10. A method for manufacturing an image sensor, the method comprising:

forming a photo-sensing element in a semiconductor substrate;

forming a capacitor structure on the semiconductor substrate, wherein forming the capacitor structure includes:

forming an insulating film on a surface of the semiconductor substrate adjacent the photo-sensing element,

forming a bottom electrode on top of the insulating film,

forming a capacitor dielectric layer on top of the bottom electrode; and

forming a top electrode on top of the capacitor dielectric layer and in contact with the photo-sensing element; and

forming a transfer transistor on the semiconductor substrate.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein forming the transfer transistor includes:

forming a gate oxide layer on the surface of the semiconductor substrate adjacent the photo-sensing element; and

forming a gate electrode on top of the gate oxide layer.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein forming the gate electrode and forming the insulating film are performed in the same processing steps.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein forming the gate electrode and forming the bottom electrode are performed in the same processing steps.

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14. The method of claim 11, wherein forming the transfer transistor further includes forming a sensing node adjacent the gate oxide layer.

15. The method of claim 10, wherein forming the capacitor dielectric layer includes contacting the capacitor dielectric layer to the photo-sensing element. 5

16. The method of claim 10 further comprising forming a spacer adjacent a side of the insulating film and a side of the bottom electrode.

17. The method of claim 10 further comprising forming a spacer adjacent to a side of the transfer transistor. 10

18. The method of claim 10 further comprising forming an isolation region in the semiconductor substrate, wherein a portion of the capacitor structure is formed on top of the isolation region. 15

19. A method for manufacturing an image sensor, the method comprising:

forming a photo-sensing element in a semiconductor substrate;

forming a capacitor structure on the semiconductor substrate, wherein forming the capacitor structure includes: 20

forming an insulating film on a surface of the semiconductor substrate adjacent the photo-sensing element,

forming a bottom electrode on top of the insulating film,

forming a capacitor dielectric layer on top of the bottom electrode;

forming a top electrode on top of the capacitor dielectric layer; and 30

forming a conducting member on top of the top electrode and in contact with the photo-sensing element; and

forming a transfer transistor on the semiconductor substrate. 35

20. The method of claim 19, wherein forming the transfer transistor includes:

forming a gate oxide layer on another surface of the semiconductor substrate adjacent the photo-sensing element; and 40

forming a gate electrode on top of the gate oxide layer.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein forming the gate electrode and forming the insulating film are performed in the same processing steps. 45

22. The method of claim 20, wherein forming the gate electrode and forming the bottom electrode are performed in the same processing steps.

23. The method of claim 20, wherein forming the transfer transistor further includes forming a sensing node adjacent the gate oxide layer. 50

24. The method of claim 19, wherein forming the capacitor dielectric layer includes contacting the capacitor dielectric layer to the photo-sensing element. 55

25. The method of claim 19 further comprising forming a spacer adjacent a side of the insulating film and a side of the bottom electrode.

26. The method of claim 19 further comprising forming a spacer adjacent to a side of the transfer transistor. 60

27. The method of claim 19 further comprising forming an isolation region in the semiconductor substrate, wherein a portion of the capacitor structure is formed on top of the isolation region.

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28. The method of claim 19, wherein:

a portion of the capacitor dielectric layer is formed over a portion of the photo-sensing element; and

a portion of the top electrode is formed over the portion of the capacitor dielectric layer that is formed over the portion of the photo-sensing element.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the portion of the capacitor dielectric layer that is formed over the photo-sensing element is configured to insulate the top electrode from the photo-sensing element.

30. A method for manufacturing an image sensor, the method comprising:

forming a photo-sensing element in a semiconductor substrate;

forming a first dielectric layer on top of the semiconductor substrate;

forming a first conductive layer on top of the first dielectric layer;

patterning, substantially simultaneously, the first dielectric layer and the first conductive layer to form an insulating film and a bottom electrode of a capacitor structure and a gate dielectric and a gate electrode of a transfer transistor; 25

forming successively a second dielectric layer and a second conductive layer over the semiconductor substrate;

removing portions of the second conductive layer and the second dielectric layer that overlie the photoelectric element and overlie the gate dielectric to form a capacitor dielectric and a top electrode of the capacitor structure; and 30

forming a conductive member over a portion of the top electrode and a portion of the photo-sensing element; wherein the conductive member electrically couples the top electrode and the photo-sensing element. 35

31. The method of claim 30 further comprising implanting dopants of a first type into an exposed portion of the semiconductor substrate that is between the insulating film and the gate dielectric to form the photo-sensing element.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the dopants are N⁺ dopants.

33. The method of claim 31 further comprising implanting dopants of a second type into a portion of the semiconductor substrate adjacent the gate electrode. 45

34. The method of claim 31, wherein the first and second types of dopants are the same type of dopant.

35. The method of claim 31, wherein the first and second types of dopants are N⁺ dopants.

36. The method of claim 30, wherein the gate dielectric is semiconductor oxide (SiO_x).

37. The method of claim 30, wherein the gate dielectric is tantalum oxide (Ta₂O₅).

38. The method of claim 30, wherein the insulating film and the gate dielectric are formed of the same type of material.

39. The method of claim 30, wherein the gate electrode and the bottom electrode are formed of the same type of material.

40. The method of claim 36, wherein the same type of material is doped polysilicon.

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